

To: Editor-in-Chief of *Vecer*

We wish to correct remarks which *Vecer* reported Minister of Justice Mihajlo Manevski made in an interview published on January 6, 2010. In the interview, the Minister referred to an alleged USAID poll on citizens' confidence in the judiciary, saying "According to the USAID poll, the judiciary is restoring citizens' confidence. In March 2008, there were 72% of the citizens who trusted the judiciary. In November the number rose to 79%, while the latest survey in March 2009 showed that 82% of the citizens had confidence in the judiciary." This is not an accurate statement, and we have previously made this clear to the Ministry of Justice.

In fact, USAID has never conducted a poll on citizens' confidence in the judiciary. However, USAID did help the Macedonian basic courts develop and implement a *Court User Satisfaction Survey* that they have used to gauge their administrative services. The survey was introduced by the USAID Macedonia Court Modernization Project in 2003 in 10 pilot courts to assess court users' satisfaction with the effectiveness and provision of *administrative services* by the courts. The survey's main purpose is as a management tool to identify the weaknesses in court operations so as to help court presidents develop solutions to address them. From January to March 2008, USAID's Judicial Reform Implementation Project worked with the Administrative Office (AO) of the Judicial Council to introduce the survey in all 27 basic courts. USAID helped the AO and the basic courts conduct the survey twice in 2008. Since then the survey has been conducted independently by the AO and the basic courts with no participation by USAID.

Minister Manevski has misrepresented the results of the data by equating court user satisfaction with public confidence in the judiciary. The Court User Satisfaction Survey does not attempt to assess judicial independence or citizens' confidence in the judiciary. Rather, it is designed to measure the satisfaction of actual court users with court *administrative services* such as ease of access, courtesy of court personnel, and so forth. The Minister has also incorrectly presented the latest survey as having been conducted by USAID.

We believe your readers deserve the correct information about USAID's role in supporting judicial reforms in Macedonia and kindly ask you to publish this letter.

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